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28th plenary meeting
Monday, 5 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 10 *(continued)*

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/1)

Mr. Čalovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): We have before us a very important and useful document by the Secretary-General on the work of our Organization. It contains important information, observations and, most welcome of all, views on the current international situation and international cooperation. It also reflects on the future role and priorities of our Organization and on the difficulties it is facing at present. All this is very helpful to all Member States, particularly those that cannot have cannot have large delegations in the various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly. I am sure that the Secretary General's report, together with the reports prepared by the Secretariat on each agenda item, will help delegations in their work during the present session of the General Assembly.

When I mention other reports prepared by the Secretariat for the present session of the General Assembly, I have particularly the "Annotated preliminary list of items to be included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third regular session of the General Assembly" (A/53/100). This report, assembled in an exemplary and professional manner by the Secretariat, is extremely important for the preparations of our delegations, both before the start of the session and during its work. The fact that each representative keeps this important document on his or her working table, together with the United Nations Charter and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, illustrates its importance and usefulness.

The Republic of Macedonia agrees with the Secretary General's statement in the report that "nations large and small are grappling with new responsibilities and new constraints" and his complaint that "unpredictability and surprise have become almost commonplace". *(A/53/1, para. 1)*

In our view, the paramount task of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly is to illuminate our vision of the twenty-first century of international relations and cooperation and to reduce the uncertainties and the surprises. This must occur in all fields of our activities, be they political, economic or social, as well as in the field of strengthening observance of international law. In order to achieve results in this respect, the General Assembly's activities should be focused and well coordinated with those of the other United Nations organs. Here, the role of Secretary General is of crucial importance. We are happy to note that he has been successfully discharging his duty to the benefit of our Organization and of all Member States.

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To improve the future international situation, many activities should be initiated and carried out within the United Nations, in the other international bodies and at the national level. The globalization of the planet forces us to find global solutions. In that process, which should be rational, the establishment of international and national priorities is unavoidable. The fact is that small countries, whether in transition or not, are those most adversely affected by the worsening of international relations and by the growing uncertainties of the present. From this perspective, one can successfully argue that the priority of the present session of the General Assembly should be the prevention of all conflicts, the resolution of those currently taking place and the enhancement of world economic cooperation, taking into account not only the larger economies but also the difficulties of the small and weak economies of many developing countries and countries in transition.

In view of the nature of my country's foreign policy, I would like to stress the importance of the Secretary-General's statement in paragraphs 43 and 44 of his report. The deployment of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) on our northern and western borders since 1992, when the Republic of Macedonia was not a member of the United Nations, should be seen as a success story of preventive diplomacy by the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Security Council. Any effort to help the stability of our region is important and highly appreciated.

At present the stability of our region depends very much on developments in Kosovo and Metohija. Just a few days ago, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia stressed, from this rostrum, the urgency of finding a political solution. It is high time to proceed in that direction.

Since I am mentioning the problems in my country's region, it is important for me to stress two matters that are of serious concern to my country and to other countries of the region at the present moment. The first is the integration of our economies into the economy of the European Union; the second is our full-fledged membership in the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Advancement on both of these priorities would immensely help the stability of our region. Hesitation, however, could generate uncertainties and problems.

The President took the Chair.

Throughout his report, the Secretary-General reflects on topics of the day, on the new roles that may be required of the multilateral organizations and on what kind of United Nations we would like to have in the coming century. We share his view that the proposed Millennium Assembly is a useful and adequate opportunity to come up with the expected vision. In the endeavour to agree on a common vision, the mutual interests of and respect for all Member States should be taken into account. The implementation of the United Nations Charter should be the aim. The relevance of the United Nations should be enhanced, particularly that of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The culture of multilateralism should also be enhanced. The maturity of agreement should be the basis for decisions. Each economy should be helped to grow. The observance of international law should be strengthened. The goal, of course, should be peace, development, justice and enhanced international cooperation. The world in the twenty-first century will be difficult to imagine without a United Nations that is more relevant.

The reform of the United Nations should therefore continue. The priority should be to strengthen the relevance of the General Assembly in world affairs by adopting a new arrangement, one that is more effective, more rational, more democratic and less costly than the present arrangement. A new arrangement, enabling all Member States, large or small, to participate in and contribute to the result-oriented activities of the General Assembly, is a clear necessity.

My delegation is pleased with the way the Secretary-General's report is structured; this enhances its usefulness. We know the priorities of the Secretary-General's agenda. I am pleased to state that we share his views and expectations for our deliberations in the coming months and in 1999.

On this occasion I would like to make a few brief observations. In our view, it is time that we started to consider the implications of conventional armaments and armed forces for international peace and security. Among other developments, the production of conventional arms, particularly offensive weapons and small arms, is increasing; the arms trade is increasing; illicit trafficking is increasing; and military forces are becoming larger. These are very unhealthy developments from the standpoint of the need to help maintain international peace and security. Each country has the right to have sufficient weapons for its national defence. However,

when it has more than it needs, that becomes a security problem for the region and for neighbouring countries.

Transparency must be enhanced, and cooperative arrangements should be supported. In that respect, I would like to mention that the Republic of Macedonia has ratified the Ottawa Convention on landmines. We consider that Convention to be a first and very important step by the international community against the abuse of conventional weapons.

Terrorism is a subject which requires our immediate attention. To condemn terrorism in all its aspects and manifestations is not enough. The present international and national efforts against terrorism should be enhanced everywhere. By fighting terrorism we are at the same time fighting illicit drug-trafficking, money-laundering and various social ills. The establishment of the International Criminal Court will also help anti-terrorist activities. We are in favour of concluding a legally binding international instrument against terrorism.

Growth and sustainable development are essential for the eradication of poverty and for the improvement of the political, economic and social situation in every country, developed or developing. Among other things, the enhancement of democratization, the observance of the rule of law and the observance of human rights very much depend on the success or failure of this process.

We are therefore pleased that in his report the Secretary-General elaborates his views on many aspects of development. From our perspective, what he says in paragraphs 110 and 112 need to be particularly emphasized. Enabling countries to be effectively and beneficially integrated into the global economy is in everyone's interest. Nobody can benefit from the marginalization of any country in the world economy. We would like to fully endorse what he says in paragraph 234. It is true that globalization is an irreversible process. It is also true that it is a manageable phenomenon. The task, therefore, should be to harness its positive potential.

I would like to conclude by expressing the great satisfaction of my delegation with both the form and the content of the Secretary-General's report. We will use it as an important guide in our activities at the present session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Moreno Fernández (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first of all to thank the Secretary-General for the new report submitted this year; like those that have preceded it, it is comprehensive, imaginative and effective.

There can be no doubt that, as the Secretary-General states in his report on the work of the Organization, more than a decade after the end of the cold war

> "the contours of the new era remain poorly understood." (*A/53/1, para. 1*)

However, it is also clear that many of the peoples and Governments that make up the United Nations today are struggling with the most challenging contradiction: the rich are becoming richer, and the poor are becoming poorer. Those peoples and Governments are hoping for action and for changes in the United Nations and in the current multilateral system — changes that should not be limited to redefining and updating priorities and existing structures.

The process of reforming, modernizing and democratizing the United Nations is facing a tough challenge, which is deeply rooted in the division of powers and jurisdictions and in the interrelationship between the principal organs of our Organization, in particular the Security Council and the General Assembly.

We agree with the Secretary-General's statement that "peace in many parts of the world remains precarious". *(A/53/1, para. 17)*

The Organization has devoted funds in the millions to peacekeeping operations, to political missions and to special missions. However, far from providing solutions to conflicts, in many cases the conflicts and their consequences have become more intense.

We should not allow the preventive actions of the Organization to be designed on the basis of cost-benefit approaches. The United Nations cannot apply a standard solution to its work in the field because every country, every situation of tension, every potential crisis and every conflict requires a different analysis, treatment and solution.

Resolution 46/59, adopted by consensus, entrusted the General Assembly with the power of sending fact-finding missions. Cuba hopes that in the Organization's new initiatives and efforts for preventive diplomacy, the letter and the spirit of that resolution will be complied with.

The General Assembly must play the fundamental role in adopting initiatives in the area of post-conflict peace-building, and, I would repeat yet again, the consent of Member States is an essential requirement for the implementation of such initiatives.

We must guarantee coordination and transparency among all the principal organs of the Organization in the decision-making processes with regard to the preparation of standby forces, the establishment of special missions and political offices and the creation of headquarters for rapid deployment missions.

Strengthening the Organization's rapid response capability for the maintenance of international peace and security cannot be an exclusive function of the Security Council.

In recent months the issue of nuclear disarmament has been the subject of significant international declarations. Of unquestioned far-reaching importance was the declaration issued by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) calling for the holding of an international conference, preferably in 1999, with the purpose of securing agreement before the end of the millennium on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament within a specific time-frame.

Nuclear disarmament should be the top priority in disarmament. Holding a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should continue to be an objective to be achieved as early as possible.

At the same time, the ad hoc committee on fissile material should negotiate a convention that will represent a practical and real step forward towards disarmament and not simply a further non-proliferation measure.

This year, 1998, marks not only the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also the fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action succeeded in codifying a genuine political consensus on world cooperation in the domain of human rights upholding the recognition of the diverse nature of those rights and articulating the interdependent nature and the interrelationship among democracy, development and human rights. However, the imbalance in mandates and initiatives in favour of civil and political rights is steadily growing.

Along with many other States, Cuba takes the view that the interdependent nature of development and human rights recognized at Vienna, and repeatedly endorsed by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, postulates a symmetrical link. If one of the parts of that link is consistently given preferential consideration, this will create an asymmetry that jeopardizes the very bases of the Vienna consensus.

At the same time, it must be noted that the assertion that work is under way "to provide substantive content to the concept of the right to development" (ibid., *para. 77*) causes concern for many States Members.

It is not now a question of promoting theoretical efforts but of fostering practical actions and, above all, of fostering the necessary political will to give effect to the articles of the Declaration dealing with the right to development.

We fully support the Secretary-General's view that

> "Meeting our commitment to enhancing economic and social development, particularly in countries in the greatest need, is an increasingly challenging task." (ibid., *para. 121*)

The Organization's lofty objectives in the area of development are being affected by the decline in official resources devoted to development and, in particular, by the fall in contributions from traditional donors to the United Nations basic resources, the keystone of the system of operational activities for development.

The reforms carried out in the economic and social sectors have not been enough, and neither have those adopted by the United Nations funds and programmes, to convince donors of the urgent need to salvage multilateralism for development. On the other hand, we note with concern the increase in non-core resources and an attendant increase in conditionalities — very often concealed — on international cooperation for development. We must preserve the universal, multilateral, neutral and non-reimbursable nature of activities for development.

Cuba is closely monitoring developments in the experimental phase of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The results of this experiment should be considered by the appropriate intergovernmental bodies. We regard this exercise involving the broadest and most direct participation on the part of Governments of recipient countries designed to bolster the coordination of operational activities in this

field. The programming of resources should continue to be the prerogative of the Governments involved and of the governing bodies of each fund, programme or specialized agency.

These issues and others, such as the role of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, should be considered comprehensively by the General Assembly in the course of the three-yearly review of the policy of operational activities, which sets the normative and legal framework for United Nations operational activities.

We have studied carefully the proposal to introduce result-based budgeting as a new concept in the context of the Organization's new initiative in the areas of administration and management. We cannot ignore the significant changes that a proposal of that nature would involve, and, accordingly, we would reaffirm the need for the General Assembly to undertake an in-depth and comprehensive study of this proposal before it is put into effect.

Cuba shares the concern expressed by the Secretary-General at the serious financial situation of the Organization. It is vital to reaffirm the need for the major contributor to pay all its contributions on time, in full and without conditions. This situation has without doubt been and continues to be the main cause of the Organization's current precarious financial situation.

Cuba reaffirms its readiness to fulfil its obligations undertaken pursuant to the Charter. Proof of this unswerving commitment are Cuba's successful efforts this year to reduce its debt substantially in the midst of the difficult economic situation that the country is experiencing, which is aggravated, as is well known, by the economic, financial and commercial embargo imposed on us by the Government of the United States.

Promotion of respect for international law and the progressive development and subsequent codification of international law should be unchanging goals of the United Nations and guiding principles for the decisions of its principal organs. The United Nations should prevent international law from continuing to be held hostage to the hegemonic interests and supposed national security priorities of powerful countries. The law of treaties should be respected and applied. We must curb the steadily growing tendency for certain States to resort to the imposition of unilateral coercive measures against other States in blatant contravention of the principle of the sovereign equality of States and the most basic rules of international law.

The process of creating an international justice system should be based on respect for the national law and internal legal order of States and implementation of the rules and principles of international law. No international criminal institution can be credible if from the very outset it is designed solely to judge the alleged flaws, threats and offenses of the countries of the South.

Cuba believes that it is not right to speak now of "attainable objectives" for the Organization. It is well known that the main commitments undertaken at the large number of important United Nations conferences have been totally ignored by most of the Member States that possess economic and financial resources but that lack sufficient political will to make good on those commitments. There is no need for the most powerful States Members of the United Nations to continue seeking to create and impose patterns of world government upon other States. What must prevail is respect for the principles of diversity in the membership and of the universal character of the Organization.

The United Nations, of course, needs to hold a Millennium Assembly — but it must be a legitimate and truly democratic Assembly to which all Member States without exception will feel they are invited, on an equal footing, by the imperatives of human solidarity. Moreover, we need an Organization that will honestly study how to reduce the growing imbalance in the distribution of world power and that, on behalf of all, will truly promote peace among 185 equally sovereign States.

The developing countries hope that multilateralism, in particular as it is reflected in the United Nations, will promote international cooperation that will make it possible to counteract the impact of the process of globalization in its neoliberal guise, which embraces all aspects of our lives, but which in most cases, far from bringing prosperity and well-being for our peoples, is globalizing underdevelopment, globalizing extreme poverty, globalizing unemployment and globalizing the volatility of the world economy.

The peoples and the Governments of the developing world want to be informed actors in a true process of globalization in order to prevent any attempt in the name of that process to impose upon us development models

that are alien to the historical, cultural and economic characteristics of our countries.

Mr. Salander (Sweden): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden — to present our views on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

We welcome the new format of both the report itself and the debate which has focused to a greater extent on the core areas of the United Nations. This was the role envisaged by the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, and we believe that the report and its oral introduction by the Secretary-General contribute to a more lively debate on the role of the United Nations in today's world.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly was indeed a Reform Assembly. The institutional reforms the Secretary-General pursued throughout the year are beginning to bear fruit. The organization of work into four core areas — peace and security, development cooperation, international economic and social affairs and humanitarian affairs — has helped the United Nations system to focus its work. This will improve the coordination of the activities of the United Nations and lead to greater impact for its programmes.

Human rights is now being dealt with as a cross-cutting issue. The Nordic countries look forward to the results of the review of the human rights machinery. We hope this will contribute to the integration of human rights aspects into all United Nations activities and to the strengthening of the implementation of human rights. The commemoration of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should first and foremost take place in the daily activities of our Governments and our international institutions.

Integration within the United Nations system is also moving ahead at the country level. We can already see some encouraging results of the "one country, one United Nations" policy that the Nordic countries have been advocating for many years. We believe that the integration of United Nations representation at the country level will prove to be one of the greatest achievements of the ongoing reform process, leading to substantive improvements and greater coherence in relations between the United Nations system and host countries. This is something we will all benefit from.

The political and financial support of the Nordic countries for multilateralism in general and for the United Nations itself in particular is well known and remains strong. We continue to provide the United Nations system with extensive voluntary contributions for development cooperation and with substantial human and financial resources for peacekeeping operations. This particular area of United Nations activities has been highly successful over the 50 years that have passed since the first mission was launched. Today's peacekeeping challenges differ from those of the past. There needs to be a stronger linkage between political, military and humanitarian responses to crisis situations. The early-action capacity needs to be enhanced and peacekeeping financing secured on a collective basis. The Nordic countries will continue actively to contribute to this ongoing process of change.

While there is a need to continue to develop the capabilities of United Nations peacekeeping, there is also a strong need to focus increasingly on conflict prevention. A variety of complementary activities within a strategic framework should be envisaged from addressing the root causes of a conflict to preventive deployment of a United Nations presence. Many lives can be spared by early action. Regional efforts — for instance, by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — are essential and should continue to be encouraged in this regard.

This year will be remembered for discouraging developments in the nuclear field. A case in point is the nuclear tests conducted earlier this year that contradict the international disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We cannot but continue to urge the countries concerned to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay and without conditions.

On the managerial reform process, the Nordic countries fully support the Secretary-General in his endeavours to introduce a results-oriented budgeting system in the United Nations. We agree with the Secretary-General when he states in his report that,

> "This initiative is of the utmost importance, because no single measure would do more to increase accountability and efficiency in the work of the Organization." *(A/53/1, para. 9)*

The public sectors in our own countries have matched decisions on political mandates with their financing, and budgets have been tied to actual results for more than a decade. Our own experience shows promising results.

A budgeting system that will focus on the actual achievements of the mandates and programmes will contribute to greater efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact of the work of the Organization. I must stress that this is not about cutting costs. It is about using the funds where they will contribute the most.

During this session of the General Assembly we will also continue that process with important decisions on reform initiatives in the environmental field.

The adoption in Rome this year of the Statute for the permanent International Criminal Court constitutes a landmark contribution to the rule of law. It is an urgent task for this session of the General Assembly to put this historic treaty in place.

The reform of the United Nations is taking place at an extraordinary time in human history and in a world greatly affected by globalization. If we were to summarize this year's general debate, we would note that globalization was mentioned by almost everyone. It is clear that globalization creates both opportunities and risks. It is the role of the international community to ensure that we benefit from the opportunities of globalization while minimizing the risks it poses. Multilateralism should flourish in a globalized world. I would like to quote what the Secretary-General said in Durban:

> "There is a temptation to retreat into our shells, to go back to the old economies of centralized State planning and protectionism or to the old politics of emphasizing regional differences rather that recognizing universal values." *(SG/SM/6688)*

The Secretary-General made it clear that we cannot hold back the tide of technological and social change. We agree with him that we have to find a way to govern through action and to protect our citizens from the disadvantages while recognizing the benefits that a more globalized world brings.

Globalization is also taking place in civil society. The United Nations must learn how to come together with civil society, academia and non-governmental organizations to a much greater extent. The Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Forum will provide us with an arena to profit from such contacts and to learn how to work together for global causes. The Millennium Assembly will also provide us with the opportunity to express ourselves on the role of multilateralism and on our common expectations for the years to come. We are looking forward to the input of the Secretary-General in this regard.

Ms. Ramiro-Lopez (Philippines): I wish to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his statement and for his report contained in document A/53/1, which provides us with a comprehensive overview on the work of the United Nations during the past year.

The report reflects the increasing number of multifaceted tasks which we, the Member States, have entrusted to the Organization at a time of decreasing resources. My delegation shares the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General on the need to provide the Organization with timely and adequate resources. It must have the necessary financial support from us the Member States, if the Organization is to survive and be effective in addressing global issues of concern to all of us. We join the Secretary-General in his appeal to Member States in arrears to honour their legal obligation and pay their assessed dues in full and without further delay.

My delegation recognizes the important efforts of the Secretary-General to reform and improve the efficiency of the Organization. The General Assembly, at the last session, endorsed several of his reform proposals. We welcome those decisions which are aimed at strengthening the Organization to enable it to implement fully all mandated programmes and activities, as well as to meet the changing needs and requirements of the Member States as we prepare for the next century. We reiterate the view that the primary objective of any further reform efforts should be to strengthen the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for development and to restore development issues to the centre of the United Nations agenda.

The General Assembly, at this session, will continue its consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals for long-term changes. We hope that these proposals will be considered in an open and transparent manner that will enable all Member States to participate in the discussions. We believe that it is only in this manner that consensus can be reached.

On section I, concerning peace and security, my delegation supports the efforts of the United Nations in

the maintenance of international peace and security. We laud the initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General in this regard. While we fully recognize the need to prevent disputes from escalating into the international arena, we believe that there is a need to have a common understanding and agreement on what constitutes preventive action. We therefore support the call of the Non-Aligned Movement for an early resumption of talks on the concept and definition of preventive diplomacy and preventive action.

In paragraph 26 of his report, the Secretary-General refers to "early warning of situations with the potential for crisis" and "an integrated preventive strategy". We would be interested in receiving details of these activities, such as the criteria used to classify a particular situation as a threat to international peace and security and the actions to be undertaken by the Organization. It is imperative to have greater transparency in these activities.

At the same time, we find the suggestion of the Secretary-General to broaden the role of the Security Council by invoking the mechanism provided in Article 65 of the United Nations Charter interesting. We believe, however, that this proposal calls for reflection and an in-depth consideration of its implications on the decision-making process of the Organization.

My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General that the challenge of development remains paramount, and if there is one issue that cuts across United Nations activities, it is the issue of development. The significant and steady decline in official development assistance to developing countries is alarming and must be reversed. Now more than ever, social amelioration programmes and safety nets that directly benefit the most vulnerable sectors in many countries must be enhanced. Also, the difficulties posed by the external debt of developing countries remain unabated, and efforts to address them must be reinforced.

The Secretary-General stated in paragraph 168 of his report that

> "Globalization has an immense potential to improve people's lives, but it can disrupt — and destroy — them as well."

We believe that the United Nations can play a significant role in fostering international cooperation and action in mitigating the negative effects of globalization.

It has been a year since the financial crisis began in Asia, which now seems to affect countries on every continent. The chain of events that quickly unfolded brought to the fore the systemic weaknesses of the current global financial system. The imperatives of the new phenomenon of massive capital movements, with their inherent volatility and far-reaching impact, call for decisive action by the international community. The recent high-level dialogue on the social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications has provided us with useful exchanges on the current global crisis, and the time has come for collective action.

My delegation applauds the efforts of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General in responding to the mandate to achieve gender equality. We note the progress made in increasing women's representation in the Professional ranks and at the D-2 level and above from 16 per cent to 22 per cent. However, we believe that as we approach the next millennium further efforts need to be undertaken in respect of increasing representation at the senior level of the Secretariat by women from developing countries.

My delegation in general subscribes to the conclusions of the Secretary-General in section VII of his report. In particular, we share his view that only universal organizations like the United Nations have the scope and legitimacy to generate the principles, norms and rules that are essential if globalization is to benefit all. We agree that the task ahead of us is to harness the considerable potential of globalization for good while devising an option plan principally designed to avert its destructive forces. The forces of globalization must be tamed to service only development and prosperity. This we must do to sustain the development path of countries and lift countless people out of misery, especially in the region of Africa.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): The Foreign Minister of Egypt, in his capacity as the Chairman of the delegation, congratulated you, Sir, on the assumption of your high office. It is now my turn to extend my own heartfelt congratulations to you and to wish you success.

I should like at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his annual report on the work of the Organization. The report reflects his wisdom and his determination to achieve the lofty objectives of the United Nations. I should like also to thank the Secretary-General for his lucid and comprehensive introduction of the report at the beginning of the general debate.

The report deals with several important issues that require careful study and active follow-up by the General Assembly. Such follow-up should be guided by the views and the proposals made by the heads of State or Government and the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the course of the general debate.

In his annual report, the Secretary-General has proposed that at the Millennium Assembly, he will suggest a set of workable objectives and institutional means for the United Nations to meet the challenges of human solidarity in the years ahead. This initiative by the Secretary-General is welcomed by my delegation. However, we believe that in order to successfully and comprehensively evaluate the experiences of the past and to chart our future course, we should start this evaluation now.

In this context, the Foreign Minister of Egypt, in his statement in the general debate on 25 September 1998, proposed that this current session

> "create a committee to commence drafting a clear statement to history to be issued at the close of the next session." *(A/53/PV.15)*

This proposal aims at providing a statement which will include our assessment of the past and our vision of the future. It should be issued before the end of the century and at the beginning of the new millennium.

For this purpose, my delegation intends to initiate informal consultations to explore the possibility of adopting the necessary draft resolution establishing such a subsidiary organ and specifying its mandate during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. My delegation hopes that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus so as to reflect the collective vision of Member States in their evaluation of past achievements and the anticipation for the future and provide a solid basis for a more effective United Nations.

In this context also my delegation finds the Secretary-General's proposal to invoke the provisions of Article 65 of the Charter very interesting. We support an examination of all the relevant dimensions of Article 65. In point of fact, we support and encourage an examination of all the dormant Articles of the Charter. Some, such as Article 43, have never been used, and many delegations do not know why. We think that this is the time for such an exercise to start.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): I, too, should like to thank the Secretary-General for drafting and introducing on 21 September the report before us today.

The decision of the Secretary-General to introduce the report in plenary before the beginning of the general debate was a welcome innovation that gave the ministerial debate greater focus.

The document is of unquestioned interest. The description of the activities of the Organization makes it possible to judge the role and activities of our Organization in the light of the great changes taking place in the world.

Mr. Maidin (Brunei Darussalam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Furthermore, the report offers our Secretary-General a new opportunity to present the initial results of his efforts to restore to the Organization the means and the dynamism that public opinion expects it to have.

The most important message of the report, I feel, is the observation that the new world environment continues to demand an in-depth reform of the Organization, along with great adaptability on the part of the Secretary-General, so that the Organization can gain the central role in international life that it deserves. We must guard against "reform fatigue", a weariness that could be fatal to our Organization.

This is why my delegation continues to fully support the Secretary-General in his efforts to transform the United Nations into a simpler, more integrated and more focused organization, able to accomplish its mission in its various fields with the maximum synergy and effectiveness.

The points made by the Secretary-General deserve even more support since they are part of a global restructuring initiative to adapt the entire Organization to the imperatives of the modern world. Such a process requires the resolute commitment of all Member States and deserves a collective, rapid and unequivocal response. Furthermore, the Secretary-General highlights well the fields and the crises in which the international community's responses have been imperfect, partial and sometimes marked by a narrow vision of the interests involved.

With a positive response by Member States and a better vision of the international general interest, we will have a clearer idea of the global role of the Organization in international life; be better able to develop the essential links between the political tasks and development work of the United Nations; and be better able to guarantee progress in the observance of human rights and international law — key elements for our Organization. A positive response will also allow us to energize relations between the principal intergovernmental organs — the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — and it should allow a better balance to be struck between them.

Three other aspects of the report also deserve highlighting. First, as the Secretary-General says, the new global environment requires more systematic cooperation between the United Nations and all the other actors striving to promote political and economic security at all levels, whether regional organizations or even extra-State actors. In this regard, we encourage the Secretary-General, along with this Assembly, to continue to strengthen the dialogue between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The Secretary-General also stresses the extreme gravity of the Organization's financial situation. As my Minister said from this rostrum last week:

> "The financial health of the Organization has not improved much over the course of the last year. Belgium believes that countries that accumulate arrears harm the entire international community. The damage goes beyond the resulting debt, because the Organization is denied the means fully to discharge its mandate. Furthermore, the reform process is jeopardized. Nothing can make up for the damage this does to international cooperation and social progress. The political and moral responsibility of those Governments is at stake. None who speak from this rostrum can claim their attachment to United Nations ideals without accepting the financial obligations involved in being a Member, that is, payment in full, on time and without conditions of their financial contributions." *(A/53/PV.10)*

Finally, Security Council reform is another exercise required by the comprehensive reform of this Organization. This delicate subject must be judged on its own merits. We need to avoid unproductive confrontation as well as to avoid putting off for ever this fundamental aspect of the reform process.

The report of the Secretary-General deals with a multitude of other questions that I have not dwelt on. I have merely sought to call attention to those questions that seemed essential to me. This was in no way meant to detract from other aspects of the report, which provides a very useful frame of reference for the activities of the United Nations and the work of this session of our Assembly. I would like to thank the Secretary-General, who I hope will next year take the same approach to the report.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I should like first of all to express the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on the work of the Organization. In general, we endorse the basic thrust of the report, which stresses a comprehensive approach to international peace and security on two fronts: the security front and the economic and social front. Permit me today to comment briefly on some of the important issues he has raised.

First, let me comment on the role of the United Nations in achieving peace and security in the new millennium. Japan agrees with the Secretary-General that it is important to transform the United Nations into a truly effective organization for the twenty-first century in order to cope with the new situation in which we are witnessing frequent regional conflicts. Towards this end we must simultaneously promote three avenues of endeavour: peace, development and United Nations reform.

In this regard, we appreciate the considerable progress that has been made in the area of the institutional reform of the United Nations. Japan believes it essential that reforms be undertaken in a balanced manner in three interrelated areas: the political area, the development area and the financial area. Let me underscore the urgent need to continue to make intensive efforts to push forward United Nations reform. In particular, the reform of the Security Council to ensure that it reflects the changes in international relations is essential for such a transformation of the United Nations into a truly effective organization for the coming century.

In dealing with regional conflicts, it is more important to focus on how to prevent conflicts than on how to settle them after they have broken out. Recognizing that economic and social development issues are often factors contributing to the outbreak of conflicts, Japan took the initiative of hosting the Tokyo International Conference on Preventive Strategy, to which

the Secretary-General referred in his report. At that conference participants underlined the importance of a comprehensive approach in addressing the factors that contribute to conflict prevention.

In this connection, the importance of arms control and disarmament cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, Japan is of the view that we urgently need to find a way to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. At the same time, to improve the effectiveness of this regime, it is important that nuclear-weapon States make sincere efforts towards nuclear disarmament. Efforts to deal with all types of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, biological and chemical weapons — as well as conventional weapons, such as small arms and anti-personnel landmines, are also essential.

Like the Secretary-General, Japan regards development as the greatest challenge the world will face in the twenty-first century. It believes that we must deal not only with the economic development problems of developing countries, but also with the social aspects of development, such as those relating to human rights and good governance. The recent ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Africa amply highlighted the importance of economic and social development for the solution of conflicts and the maintenance of peace and security.

For the United Nations to be truly effective, it must be able to demonstrate that through its contributions the plight of Africa has improved. Japan, for its part, has been promoting a new development strategy. It will host the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II), together with the United Nations and the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA), later this month in Tokyo. Japan is pleased that the Secretary-General, together with many leaders from Africa and other regions, will participate in the Conference.

Japan also welcomes the Secretary-General's strategy to create a culture of communication to enhance the links between the United Nations, the media and civil society. We hope the Department of Public Information will play a leading role in implementing such a strategy to cultivate new international actors.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Japan's commitment to participate actively in discussions throughout this General Assembly session of various important points raised by the Secretary-General in his report.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): May I say what a pleasure it is to speak under your chairmanship, Sir.

I wish to record my delegation's gratitude for the Secretary-General's report. It provides, succinctly and accurately, an excellent snapshot of where the Organization stands today. It also gives us signposts for the route ahead when it comes to deciding what kind of United Nations we, the Member States, want in the twenty-first century.

I will comment briefly on a key area of the report today. That is the "quiet revolution", as the Secretary-General calls it, to revitalize the organizational machinery. As the report makes clear, and indeed as we increasingly see for ourselves in our dealings with the Organization, a tremendous amount, with far-reaching and beneficial effects, has already been achieved in a very short space of time.

I want to convey New Zealand's appreciation to the Secretary-General and his senior officers for their unstinting efforts in addressing reform over the past year. Institutional changes, including the establishment of a Senior Management Group, the Executive Committees and the appointment of the Deputy Secretary-General, have brought about greater coherence in policy and planning and stronger direction within the United Nations. The development of productive relations with the Bretton Woods institutions has also been a major step forward.

The Secretary-General reminds us in his report, however, of three important reform measures that are the responsibility of this General Assembly. These are: time limits on new mandates, the Development Account and results-based budgeting. In respect of the last item, results-based budgeting, the Secretary-General rightly points out that its adoption is of the utmost importance to increasing accountability and efficiency in the Organization. In this, as in other reforms, I wish to assure the Secretary-General that he may count on my delegation's full support.

The Secretary-General's report covers a range of other ideas which my delegation will study with interest. For example, he touches on the possibility of strengthening linkages between the Security Council and

the Economic and Social Council, making greater use of Article 65 of the Charter.

I also want to refer briefly to the Secretary-General's comments on the importance of development. We are reminded in the report of the stark figures behind the current turbulence in financial markets, particularly in Asia. The report notes that 50 million people in Indonesia alone may be thrown back into poverty. This is a human tragedy in anyone's terms. The importance of turning around the decline in official development assistance takes on an added dimension when we are confronted with such a picture. It is important that donors respond positively to this call. I am pleased to record that New Zealand for its part has increased its official development assistance by 26 per cent in the last three years.

Finally, the Secretary-General's comments on globalization foreshadowed what would become the dominant theme of the general debate over the past two weeks. As the report points out, the new dimensions of the phenomenon can only be addressed multilaterally. It seems to my delegation there is overwhelming agreement on this score arising from the debate.

May I say that given the positive and forward-looking changes the Secretary-General has brought about in such a short time, we are confident that we have now an Organization that is increasingly able to address such issues even more effectively. The Secretary-General's "quiet revolution" has begun to pay important dividends for us all. He deserves our fullest support.

Mr. Galuska (Czech Republic): In his statement on 21 September, the Secretary-General, reporting on the work of the Organization, expressed the conviction that everybody had read his report from "cover to cover". This remark drew laughter from his audience, but the report he presented definitely deserves our appreciation and full attention. It is comprehensive and understandable and contains new ideas and suggestions.

While we welcome the achievements of the United Nations in many areas, we are aware that much remains to be done. The recent period has shown us how difficult it would be to overcome the stalemate in the Organization brought about by the cold war era and the North-South confrontation, and to create a new model of the United Nations, capable of dealing efficiently with the requirements of today's world and those of the future.

In this context, we applaud the Secretary-General's proposal for the Millennium Assembly, which gives us a unique opportunity to think about the concept of the Organization for the next century. As the year 2000 approaches, we should use the remaining time efficiently, preparing food for thought about what from now on should be one of our main tasks. We look forward to seeing the Secretary-General's proposals for the ways in which to meet the Organization's forthcoming challenges, and we await the recommendations expected to emanate from the "global town meetings".

We believe that if such meetings are to be fully beneficial to the United Nations it is essential that they be well focused. Relevant topics should be suggested by the Secretariat, and the meetings should be attended by the appropriate level United Nations officials. The Czech Republic will take an active part in this process, as expressed by the fact that the preparations for a conference called "Forum 2000" are under way in Prague. The conference is aimed at highlighting the global problems that mankind faces at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

In order to prepare for what lies ahead, we should expeditiously finalize the institutional reform and take action on the Secretary-General's deferred proposals, particularly on the specific time limits for all new mandates, the results-based budgeting system and the Development Account.

It is obvious that the reform measures that have been implemented are already bearing fruit. The new organization of the work programme and the new structure of leadership now manage cross-cutting and overlapping policy issues more effectively. The budget has been reduced. Bureaucracy is being streamlined, and the saved resources might be redirected to programme accomplishment. The new structure of management makes it possible to view the problems and their causes more clearly, from a broader perspective, thus enabling innovative solutions.

We should further elaborate on the idea of preventive peace-building based on the observation of the wide spectrum of causes of threats to human security and on the relationship between social justice, material well-being and peace. Interesting in this context is the suggestion to extend the Security Council's role to economic, social and development areas through closer cooperation with the Economic and Social Council.

We regret that the new approach in the area of disarmament has not yet been fully implemented. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the arms control agenda as essentially multilateral and the determination of the role of the United Nations as norm-setting are important steps in the right direction, as is the idea of strengthening and consolidating the principles of disarmament. In this context, let me express our support for the Secretary-General's idea of holding a United Nations conference on all aspects of the illicit arms trade in order to seek a global consensus on monitoring and controlling illicit arms transfers and their links with trafficking in other contraband goods.

As to peacekeeping, we welcome the effort of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to strengthen the Organization's capacity to respond swiftly, and we also welcome the significant progress achieved in the development of the United Nations standby arrangements system and the new promising concept of "smart sanctions".

The role of the United Nations in strengthening the international legal order is, in our view, of paramount importance and, as a matter of fact, truly indispensable for ensuring the rule of law, stability and the development of the global international community on the verge of the new millennium. In this year of commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United Nations has continued to act vigorously in protecting and promoting human rights.

A genuine breakthrough in international law was achieved with the successful conclusion of the United Nations Diplomatic Conference on the Establishment of the International Criminal Court. The adoption of the Rome Statute is indeed of historic significance and now the challenge is to ensure that enough ratifications are made to enable the Court to be effectively established within a reasonable period of time. We find it particularly helpful that the Secretary-General tackles the issue of encouraging Member States to ratify the Statute.

But it would not be honest to start and finish my comments merely with compliments. On one point, my delegation feels that the report does not reflect properly what has been a common understanding in the United Nations for some time now. I am referring to the interpretation of the concept of sustainable development. Last year, the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly reconfirmed the results of the Rio Conference and stated explicitly that sustainable development is a balance of economic, social and environmental goals. However, the report seems to repeat the past confusion. In chapter II, sustainable development is contained as just one item under the heading "Cooperating for development" instead of being made, in accordance with the now dominant perception, a core concept of the whole development cooperation. Moreover, the picture of activities in this area is far too selective, giving only a few random examples.

In contrast to this, sustainable development appears in much greater complexity in another part of the report, in chapter IV, under the heading "The environmental dimension". No doubt, the concept of sustainable development has been largely inspired by environmental concerns, but we believe that the problem of equating "environment" with "sustainable development" has already been overcome. We would hope that future reports will treat such important areas of United Nations activities as environment and sustainable development in a more balanced way.

To conclude, let me strike a more optimistic note. If there is an area in which the United Nations fulfils our expectations, it is communications. Tremendous progress has been achieved here. Adding a new dimension to our daily interaction with the United Nations, as well as enhancing the links between the Organization, the media and the public, the United Nations Website has become an indispensable tool that will also be instrumental in paving the way for the future reform process.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Although my Minister for Foreign Affairs has already done so, I wished to congratulate him personally.

I wish first to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts in preparing the report contained in document A/53/1 on the work of the Organization. We fully support his efforts to strengthen our Organization's role.

Having read the report, we wish to express our appreciation of the fact that he has stressed the challenges to humanity, as he sees them. One issue that was a priority for which peoples and States sought to create this Organization and the League of Nations before it was saving the world from the scourge of war, which undermined security, terrorized innocent civilians and expunged the results of development efforts in many parts

of the world. Peace and security are the basis of everything and can be established only through the implementation of United Nations Charter provisions which call for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The world today can see a developing trend among certain Powers taking the law into their own hands, and bending it to serve their selfish interests, ignoring the destiny of other peoples. I cite the example of the missiles launched by the United States of America against the pharmaceutical factory in the Sudan. This is only the most recent example of this trend. As we cite it as evidence of that trend, we express our support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote international peace and security. In chapter IV of his report, he tells us that one of the United Nations basic missions is to prevent war. In return, we say to him that we still need the United Nations to undertake its role in that regard and to prevent aggression, by stressing the rule of law, not the rule of force.

The Secretary-General's efforts at reforming the Organization have been welcome and appreciated by all. We hope that our discussions and comments today will help him in his endeavours to strengthen the Organization's role as the world stands on the threshold of the new millennium. In this context, my delegation is of the opinion that the convening of the Millennium Assembly will be a milestone in the elaboration of a new vision for the future. We therefore urge that it be prepared in the framework of collective intergovernmental action. We also call for the emergence through that Assembly of practical and implementable goals for serving humanity as a whole. Otherwise, it will be just another ceremonial occasion.

Turning to the role of diplomacy, we fully share the Secretary-General's vision that it plays a central role in containing and preventing conflicts. However, my delegation agrees that, for preventive efforts to succeed, the consent of all parties concerned must be secured.

The Secretary-General touches on another important topic in his report: sanctions. In this context, if there is a need for sanctions, we advocate the observance of the following: First, they should not be used as an instrument to serve narrow interests or special political agendas; secondly, they should have well-defined goals; and thirdly, sanctions must be implemented and lifted in a specified time-frame, given their negative effects on all aspects of the lives of peoples.

As to human rights, our Organization is commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Meanwhile, however, one noble principle has yet to be implemented: the right of peoples to development. This right goes hand in hand with another matter that should be addressed in the framework of the Secretary-General's reform efforts in the human rights area, namely, the issue of double standards when dealing with human rights.

As to humanitarian assistance, we are of the opinion that the most important area of concentration should be to remedy the great deficiency in the resources devoted to humanitarian assistance. We also need more coordination in the efforts to achieve total transparency to meet the humanitarian needs of various regions of the world, including the Sudan.

In conclusion, I reiterate that we support the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance the role of the Organization and are fully prepared to contribute to any effort to strengthen the United Nations and enable it to meet the challenges of our times.

Mr. Babar (Pakistan): Like previous speakers, I would like first to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his annual report on the work of the Organization. The report covers a wide range of issues, including challenges before the United Nations in the new millennium and matters relating to peace and security, disarmament, sanctions, poverty eradication, social and economic development, refugee problems and administrative matters of the Secretariat.

We agree with the Secretary-General that conflict prevention should be one of the Organization's deepest commitments. Yet there is still too little emphasis on preventive action. In our view, conflict prevention cannot succeed unless the root causes of disputes are squarely addressed.

We agree that preventive diplomacy provides the best course in preventing costly conflicts. We commend the Secretary-General's personal contribution to the field of preventive diplomacy, particularly his visit to Baghdad earlier this year and the memorandum signed by him with the Iraqi leadership, which helped in defusing a potentially dangerous situation.

While we agree and share the Secretary-General's concern that the rising tension between India and Pakistan is a major cause of concern, in our view the Jammu and

Kashmir dispute deserved a more detailed reference in his report. With the nuclearization of South Asia, this issue needs greater attention by the international community, particularly the United Nations.

The Jammu and Kashmir dispute is the oldest dispute on the agenda of the United Nations. India's refusal to allow the people of Kashmir to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, is the root cause of the dispute, which has engendered conflict and tensions between Pakistan and India for the last 50 years. We therefore hope that the Secretary-General will continue his own efforts for the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, and will reflect in detail the outcome of his efforts in his next report. Pakistan, for its part, will make every effort to find a negotiated settlement of the problem through the Foreign Secretary-level talks, which are likely to resume by the end of this month.

We fully share the Secretary-General's concern about the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process and escalating violence in Kosovo. We are also deeply concerned at the rising tensions between Iran and Afghanistan, and hope that the two countries will exercise the utmost restraint and will resolve their differences amicably.

Pakistan notes the Secretary-General's concern about nuclear developments in South Asia. We had proposed measures both bilaterally and in the relevant multilateral forums to keep South Asia free of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, India rejected all our initiatives.

Pakistan has also explained the rationale behind its own nuclear tests on several occasions in the past. The Prime Minister of Pakistan told the General Assembly on 23 September 1998:

> "Pakistan's nuclear tests were conducted not to challenge the existing non-proliferation regime, nor to fulfil any great power ambition. They were designed to prevent the threat or use of force against Pakistan." *(A/53/PV.12)*

Pakistan agrees with the view that peacekeeping can be a valuable tool for conflict prevention. Our own commitment to peacekeeping is based on a fundamental belief in the promotion of international peace, collective security, preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building. Pakistan believes that peacekeeping operations must have a clear political direction, a precise mandate and an effective command and control structure, as well as clearly defined and uniform rules of engagement. We also believe that no restrictive time limit or arbitrary "sunset" clauses should be imposed on peacekeeping operations. Efforts instead should be made to find just and durable solutions to long-standing problems and disputes, pending which ongoing peacekeeping operations should be fully and effectively maintained.

Pakistan is itself a beneficiary of one of the oldest United Nations peacekeeping operations, namely, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which continues to play an important role in maintaining peace and security in South Asia. We hope that the Secretary-General will agree to the strengthening of UNMOGIP to enable it to carry out its mandated tasks more effectively.

We deeply regret that on 27 September 1998 the Indian army fired upon an UNMOGIP vehicle across the line of control in Azad Kashmir. Pakistan is gravely concerned at this incident, which was ostensibly aimed at preventing UNMOGIP personnel from carrying out their peacekeeping work.

The Secretary-General's report gives the impression that the establishment of the headquarters of the United Nations Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) in Copenhagen was a United Nations initiative. Let me clarify here for the record that SHIRBRIG has not been mandated by the United Nations and is therefore not a United Nations initiative. If SHIRBRIG has to be created, it should be done by the United Nations and all Members should be asked to contribute towards this force.

We are fast approaching the new millennium. It should be our collective endeavour to make the next century an era of peace, progress and economic prosperity for all humanity. The goals of globalization and economic liberalization will be unattainable unless we evolve a level playing field in the emerging international system. We particularly need to develop a predictable international financial mechanism, reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, ensure a predictable flow of resources for national anti-poverty programmes and substantially increase external aid from its current levels. We believe that unless such urgent remedial measures are taken, the vision of globalization will remain only a dream.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General on successfully carrying out his "quiet revolution" of institutional reforms. We hope that the appointment of the Deputy Secretary-General, the establishment of a cabinet-style Senior Management Group, the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the streamlining of the Secretariat through the redistribution of work and cutting of a thousand posts will contribute to the United Nations efforts to meet the challenges of the next millennium in an effective manner.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General for his report *(A/53/1)* on the work of the Organization. May I take this opportunity to comment on some issues addressed by the Secretary-General in the report, which we find useful and informative.

Engaging with globalization seems to be an undeniable fact of our collective life today; for the past decade or so it has made itself felt to different degrees and in different forms in various areas of national life. While it may be some time before we all arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the intricate inner workings of this rather new process, there is no shortage of pain and anguish in various part of the globe as a result of its disquieting ripple effects.

We are all cognizant of the fact that powerful transnational forces are at work reshaping the key features of world markets in capital, goods, services, labour and technology. Likewise, we are aware that the twin processes of globalization and liberalization have expanded and deepened the mutual interdependence of societies, which has, in turn, increased the potential for international interaction and cooperation. No doubt this process has certain beneficiaries, which may even include some interests, groups and countries of the developing world. But the bulk of the developing world, particularly the least developed countries, is receiving the short end of the stick. The promises have yet to become reality, at least for most developing societies, but the negative consequences, mostly of a disruptive nature, are already part of their social, political and economic landscape.

The galloping pace of global integration in various fields and areas has substantially increased the degree of vulnerability in the developing world and made the element of uncertainty a part of its everyday life and of its future. Today for many developing societies marginalization and exclusion are not a distant possibility, but a very bleak tomorrow. As a practical outcome of the globalization process, the inequality between and within nations is increasing and the gap between poor and rich has widened.

What I have just briefly touched on deals with the reality of the situation, which should inevitably serve as our point of departure. This situation calls for a genuine and meaningful global partnership and strengthened international economic cooperation, with the objective of ensuring that the benefits of the ongoing process of globalization are spread to the maximum extent possible among all the actors at the global level, while its adverse and disruptive consequences are minimized and harnessed.

Ironically, while the need to strengthen international economic cooperation and establish an international trading system based on the principles of international law and recognized norms and regulations has been reiterated in most intergovernmental forums, recourse to unilateral coercive economic measures and the enactment of domestic laws with extraterritorial effects have been on the rise. Such policies and measures constitute a major barrier to free trade and the access of all countries to markets, and thus hamper the economic development and expansion of trade relations at all levels. Moreover, such measures contradict not only the basic principles of international law but also the goals and objectives for which the World Trade Organization was created.

Declining official development assistance is one of the main concerns of developing countries. The recent financial crisis and its adverse impact on the developing world has also seriously undermined the social achievements of most developing countries. Unfortunately, official development assistance, which is a major external source for financing development and a crucial input for infrastructure and social sector development in developing countries, has declined steadily throughout this decade.

The operational activities of the United Nations system are perhaps the function of the system with the most tangible outcome, and their range and diversity have increased considerably in response to the growing diversity of situations and demands in the developing world. International conferences have produced a broad consensus on development goals and policies, which should be followed up by the system on the basis of common objectives and coordination, as well as priorities of programmes and recipient countries. The main

objective of operational activities is to support and assist developing countries to enhance their capacity to address challenges and utilize their resources for taking advantage of existing opportunities in the global arena.

The major common priority for almost all developing countries is poverty eradication, which requires progress in such critical areas as population, children, health, food security, education, and cross-cutting themes, such as finance, trade, science and technology and human resource development. Currently, lack of core and general resources is the main impediment to the expansion and implementation of operational activities. The United Nations as a whole, particularly its programmes and funds, has gone through structural reforms to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Yet this process has not been matched by the necessary increase in contributions to core and general resources, as a basis for preserving the multilateral character of these programmes and funds. This is a serious challenge which should be tackled and addressed by the donor community.

Turning to humanitarian issues, I regard it as a matter of great concern that the international response to the need for humanitarian assistance has declined in both absolute and relative terms in recent years. There is a serious gap between humanitarian needs and available resources, which is widening year by year. Moreover, some donors continue to earmark their funds for specific activities. Such a trend could undermine the capacity of the United Nations system to respond and assist developing countries to establish early-warning systems, mitigate natural disasters and prepare for them, as well as in relief, rehabilitation and development of areas stricken by such disasters, particularly earthquakes.

The issue of refugees in the developing world also needs special attention. Presently the Islamic Republic of Iran is hosting the largest refugee population in the world, with more than 2 million refugees from neighbouring countries, especially Afghanistan. The impact of the influx of refugees into the developing countries is multifaceted; there is a serious adverse impact on economic and social development especially in the form of increased domestic unemployment rates and the imposition of a heavy burden on the domestic resources, infrastructure and environment of developing host countries. The efforts of host developing countries to face the challenges resulting from an influx of refugees from neighbouring countries should be supplemented by assistance from the international community. An inter-agency coordination mechanism is necessary to ensure sufficient assistance to developing host countries and also to provide essential services for refugees — in particular, women, children and elderly.

Turning to disarmament issues, I would like to welcome the establishment of two ad hoc committees in the Conference on Disarmament, referred to in the Secretary-General's report. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that this development should serve as a step towards nuclear disarmament through discussions in the ad hoc committee on a fissile material cut-off treaty on the production as well as the elimination of all weapons-grade stockpiles of fissile material. We concur with the Secretary-General that the eight-nation joint declaration on creating a nuclear-free world is a positive development. Nonetheless, it is regrettable that despite such a promising initiative, and despite the wish of the overwhelming majority of Member States, the Conference on Disarmament failed to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also welcomes the consideration being given to existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and to the establishment of such zones in other regions. It is imperative that the United Nations should stay at the forefront of international efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions where such zones do not exist, particularly in the Middle East, in accordance with the decision of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

I cannot conclude without echoing the Secretary-General's emphasis on the importance of the question of human rights. While the collective campaign of the world community to define, promote and protect human rights throughout the globe represents a great achievement by humanity at large, and needs to be cherished by all, the imperative of a balanced approach to all aspects of human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural, should not be theoretically underestimated or practically neglected. In this context, due attention and consideration need to be paid to the specific particularities of all societies.

Finally, I would like to reassure the Secretary-General and his staff of my delegation's sincere support and full cooperation for the betterment of the Organization in the year ahead.

Mr. Benítez Sáenz (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We should like to thank the Secretary-General for his valuable report on the work of the Organization

and to congratulate him on its quality. The Secretary-General has given us a candid and lucid catalogue of the principal activities of the system. We consider the proposals and analysis that he has presented to be of great interest.

We commend the efforts being made, which are highlighted in the report, with regard to conflict prevention. Our commitment to that issue should continue to be one of the most steadfast that we undertake in this Organization. Preventing potential conflicts spilling over into violence requires early warning of potential crisis situations, adequate analysis, an integrated strategy and the political will and necessary resources to put that strategy into effect.

We note with interest the Secretary-General's initiative to invoke the Charter provision on an interrelationship between the activities of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, taking into account that the latter is increasingly required to address the economic, social and humanitarian crises that threaten global security.

We fully share the Secretary-General's concern to make the eradication of poverty an intersectoral and key objective of the United Nations system, and we congratulate him on his work over the past year, during which the Organization has given support to more than a hundred countries in preparing, formulating and executing national programmes to combat poverty.

The report also stresses — rightly — that human rights issues should not be considered in isolation from the other activities of the United Nations; rather, as the Secretary-General has clearly indicated, they should be a common thread running through all activities. This Organization plays a unique role in defining and protecting human rights. We are happy that 1998, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has also seen the adoption in Rome of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, a legal instrument designed to do away once and for all with what Mr. Kofi Annan accurately describes as the culture of impunity.

We also agree in particular with the general approach taken by the report to the effect that the United Nations system should continue to act with firm resolve in the face of global threats such as the scourges of terrorism and drug-trafficking.

My delegation applauds the Secretary-General's vision in placing disarmament at the heart of the task of maintaining international peace and security. The adoption, at the end of 1997, of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was a achievement that we can rightly describe as unprecedented, despite the fact that there have been significant advances in the disarmament area.

We agree with the Secretary-General that we are at a critical moment in our endeavours to reduce the danger of nuclear weapons. Humankind has not rid itself of the threat of nuclear annihilation. No less disquieting is the threat still presented by chemical and biological weapons.

Uruguay, as an important contributor to peacekeeping operations, is concerned to learn from the report of the Secretary-General that the total number of peacekeepers in the field has dropped since the beginning of the 1990s, even though the number of conflicts has not decreased proportionately.

We share the concern of the Secretary-General, as reflected in the report, that development continues to be a huge challenge for a world in which a fifth of humankind has to survive on just $1 a day. This brutal reality persists, despite the fact that in the past half-century we have seen one of the most widespread periods of economic expansion in history.

We are pleased to note that in the course of the last year, despite major financial constraints, this Organization has made real progress in the humanitarian field, providing high-quality assistance and mobilizing its resources to alleviate the situation of civilian populations in conflict situations while attending to the needs of displaced persons and refugees.

The challenge today, then, is not to resist or reverse the process of globalization, but to take advantage of all its positive potential and counteract its adverse effects. We agree with the Secretary-General that the United Nations today has the necessary legitimacy to do this and that strengthening it will assist in achieving these objectives.

Lastly, the quest for international peace and security will require complementary action on two fronts: security, where victory means freeing ourselves from fear and the socio-economic front, where victory will mean meeting basic needs. Only in this way can the United Nations continue to be the indispensable instrument to

achieve our common objectives and a unanimous expression of our common humanity.

Mr. Francese (Italy): I wish today to express Italy's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his impressive second report on the work of the Organization, a report which notes the already remarkable progress that has been made since the issuance of his first report, last year. Most of the reforms implemented by the Secretary-General during the first year of his term are now well in place, and his streamlining of structures is already starting to bear its first fruits. I fully trust that this trend will continue, and Italy looks forward to making its contributions to the ongoing discussion of how to make the United Nations better able to meet the challenges of the coming millennium.

In the area of disarmament, Italy welcomes the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala, with his lifetime of active commitment to making disarmament issues a United Nations priority.

I will confine my remarks to only some aspects of the report.

Efforts to reduce the danger of nuclear weapons are facing a critical moment. Thus, Italy welcomes the establishment of two ad hoc committees in the Conference on Disarmament, one to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive devices and the other to negotiate arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. To reach agreement on that issue, Italy supports the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of a permanent dialogue between nuclear and non-nuclear States and, in terms of other types of weapons of mass destruction, we strongly supported the declaration of the informal ministerial meeting on negotiations towards the conclusion of the Protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, recently issued in New York.

The approval of an "evolving" European Union code of conduct that would provide for an annual comparison and update of partners' policies in the crucial area of arms exports has been a positive step. Italy was particularly active in supporting this initiative and intends to contribute its ideas to the next stage: making the code a fully working reality. We think more energy should be dedicated to comparing and studying domestic procedures for arms export.

Furthermore, Italy is deeply committed to defining a more precise and effective international frame of reference on arms transfers, non-proliferation and the detection and prevention of the destabilizing stockpiling of weapons. In 1999, the review process of the initial elements of the Wassenaar Arrangement, chaired by Ambassador Luigi Lauriola, will start, and we expect it to contribute positively to the establishment of an international agenda on small arms and light weapons.

Peace and security figure among the priority responsibilities of the United Nations, and we are prepared to discuss the important issue of the reform of the Security Council under agenda item 59 of this session of the General Assembly. Today, I only wish to anticipate the reaffirmation of Italy's commitment to the reform of the Security Council. We strongly believe that the debate on the future of the Security Council pivots on the concepts of democracy and representation. Therefore, we will continue to be ready to pursue discussions in, and make our contributions to, the debate in the Open-ended Working Group in order to achieve the general agreement mandated in resolution 48/26, by which the General Assembly established the Working Group. We recognize the urgency of the matter but note the risk of making hasty decisions before a truly general agreement has been reached. As the President of the General Assembly rightly indicated in his statement last Friday at the conclusion of the general debate, the matter of institutional reform requires careful analysis, prudence and a spirit of cooperation, and it represents a process in which time is not the decisive factor.

On peacekeeping operations, Italy supports the efforts under way to promote standby arrangements, the documents for which Italy has signed, to provide the United Nations with a rapid deployment capacity. To strengthen every component of peacekeeping, the Secretariat, in response to the Fifth Committee's invitation, should first define the concept of logistic support as the frame of reference for all initiatives in the sector.

Within the framework of regional arrangements, we are closely following the endeavours of friendly African countries, and of the Organization of African Unity in particular, to improve the capacity to respond to and intervene in crisis situations on their continent. We look with favour on the possible creation within the United Nations of a support group to study such issues and offer concrete assistance to the African States.

With regard to sanctions, Italy fully shares the Secretary-General's emphasis on the need for a more humane and efficient sanctions regime. We welcome his reference to a more generalized use of targeted sanctions, following the models that have been adopted recently in Angola and Sierra Leone. Italy is convinced that the sanctions regime, as the Secretary-General's report stresses, should contain specific measures to introduce humanitarian exceptions in favour of the most vulnerable segments of the civilian population. In this respect, we support the conclusions recently adopted on this subject by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In the area of development cooperation, Italy is pleased to welcome the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform proposals aimed at fostering greater internal coordination, streamlining procedures and rationalizing the activities of the Organization. In this context, we underline the positive results thus far achieved by the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. The preliminary application of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in 18 pilot countries, and the more intense collaboration between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations, are also producing encouraging results.

I recall that in 1997, 65 per cent of Italian development assistance was granted on a multilateral basis. Of this amount, 25 per cent was channelled through the United Nations, whose development programmes, especially in the poorest and least advanced countries, we deem a matter of top priority.

A more streamlined United Nations will make it possible to free resources and assure their more effective utilization for development cooperation, in particular for the priority objective of eradicating poverty. We appreciate the pivotal role that this issue has been given in the work of next year's session of the Economic and Social Council. Presiding over the Economic and Social Council next year, Italy will focus its efforts on renewing that body's role of coordination at the hub of the many United Nations activities in the social and economic sector.

As Italian Foreign Minister Dini stated in his recent address to the General Assembly, the recent financial crises affecting the world

> "shed light on an improper balance between the power of the market and the power of institutions. Globalization and liberalization certainly have great merits ... But a global market requires some measure of global government." *(A/53/PV.11)*

In today's climate, the United Nations has a unique role to play as a central point of reference, to help see beyond momentary euphoria and crisis and instead lay the foundations for a vision that is genuinely universal. In this context, we welcome the Secretary-General's reference to the dormant provision of Article 65 of the Charter regarding the relationship between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. In our view, Article 65 could provide a more effective tool for meeting the challenges of globalization.

With regard to humanitarian assistance, Italy welcomes the positive results achieved, especially in the field of coordination, through the establishment of the post of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We welcome the fact that for the first time the Economic and Social Council dedicated a segment of its substantive session in July to humanitarian affairs. We look forward to further enhancement of this line of action, and hope that it will be continued at next year's session.

Italy praises the Secretary-General's emphasis on strengthening the international legal order. The report rightly examines three main aspects: the human rights regime, the activities of the ad hoc international tribunals, and the recent establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court.

We share the Secretary-General's belief that the promotion of human rights should not be treated as something separate from the Organization's other activities. Rather, such promotion is an essential element of all United Nations activities, in particular those aimed at the maintenance of international peace and security, at every stage of their performance. We also welcome his appeal to those Member States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The President returned to the Chair.

The two ad hoc tribunals, on former Yugoslavia and on Rwanda, have made substantial progress. The Secretary-General's report notes that, as of August 1998, the two courts had issued public indictments against

almost 100 people. The report also highlights the Rwanda Tribunal's recent decisions on the commission of the crime of genocide. These decisions represent the first judgements ever issued by an established international judiciary body on genocide, the gravest crime of concern to the international community as a whole.

This year, 1998, also saw the adoption, on 17 July, of the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court. The adoption of the statute of the Court is a landmark in the development of international criminal law. It constitutes a major achievement for the United Nations and for the entire international community. As Italy's Foreign Minister, Lamberto Dini, stated here two weeks ago,

> "The Rome statute to establish the International Criminal Court represents what is probably the greatest institutional advancement since the San Francisco Charter". (*A/53/PV.11*)

We are confident that the process of signature and ratification of the statute will advance rapidly in order to allow its quick entry into force.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/53/1?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 10.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolution (A/53/L.2/Rev.1)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Indonesia to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia): Let me begin by making a small correction to paragraph 6 of draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1. The words "paragraph 4" should be replaced by the words "paragraphs 4 and 5".

I now have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1, entitled "Emergency assistance to Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis". We are pleased to be associated with this draft resolution, which calls for support for Member States affected by the ravages of hurricane Georges.

Always at this time of the year, the island countries of the Caribbean pray for an uneventful hurricane season. Yet again this year, this was not meant to be. In the early morning hours of Sunday, 20 September, hurricane Georges began to unleash its fury, first in Antigua and Barbuda, then in Saint Kitts and Nevis. The battering continued in the tiny islands of Saba and Sint Eustatius. Next came the Dominican Republic and Haiti. But Georges had not finished its onslaught. It next hit Cuba and Puerto Rico. Not satisfied with its feast on the capital infrastructure and the fruits of the productive agricultural sectors of those islands, Georges moved to the south-east United States.

Although damage estimates are still coming in, the preliminary figures rest at over $200 million for Antigua and Barbuda, and over $400 million for Saint Kitts and Nevis, with the destruction of over 50 per cent of that country's agricultural sector. Usually a rather resilient crop, the sugar cane simply buckled under the 100-plus-mile-an-hour winds. The estimate is approximately $1.6 billion in the Dominican Republic and $1.2 billion in Haiti. In Cuba, the majority of damage was sustained in the agricultural sector. In the United States alone, the estimates have reached more than half a billion dollars.

Yet, beyond the dollars associated with the passage of the hurricane, Georges took with it approximately 500 lives: many people who were in their most productive years and still others who would have been barely old enough to remember Georges had they only survived.

The present draft resolution calls attention to this destruction and loss of life. It notes the enormous effort that will be required to alleviate the grave situation. It

recognizes the prompt response being made by Governments, agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, international and regional agencies, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. It requests assistance in identifying the medium- and long-term needs of the affected countries and in mobilizing resources. It also requests assistance in strengthening the disaster-preparedness and disaster-prevention capacities of the region.

In past experiences with such disasters, the quick response of friendly Governments and of regional and international agencies, such as the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency, the United Nations Disaster Management Team and the United Nations Development Programme — as well as of many non-governmental organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross — has been a welcome contribution to the efforts of the Governments of the affected countries. The countries affected by hurricane Georges are deeply grateful for the assistance provided thus far and for that which is still to come.

In this regard, special mention needs to be made of the offers of assistance from the Governments of Cuba and Argentina. The deployment of "White Helmets" out of Argentina and medical personnel and equipment from Havana are superb examples of the importance of South-South cooperation.

Before concluding, it is also my pleasure to all that, besides the Group of 77 and China, the following countries have expressed their desire to be sponsors of this draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

Finally, the sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1 wish to thank all the delegations that contributed to its content and commend it to the Assembly with the hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union deeply deplores the loss of life and the destruction caused by hurricane Georges in Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis and other countries and territories of the region. The European Union recognizes the medium- and long-term effects of the disaster, which require the efforts of national and international agencies and private initiatives to provide relief. The European Union has contributed generously to support these efforts. The European Union would like to thank the sponsors of this draft resolution for their cooperation, which has led the Member States of the Union to co-sponsor it.

Mrs. Cornette (Guyana): Guyana, currently chairing the group of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) delegations in New York, has the particular honour to speak on this item regarding draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1, entitled "Emergency assistance to Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis".

We urge the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of this draft resolution. This timely action bears testimony to the support and solidarity of the international community for the Governments and the peoples affected by hurricane Georges, which left in its wake a path of death and destruction. CARICOM Governments have a special concern for the affected countries, which are mainly sister States of the Caribbean region and which include member States of the Caribbean Community.

We extend from this rostrum our sympathies to the Governments and the peoples of Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis on the tragic loss of life and the destruction of property. We pledge our full support and solidarity to them in the important task of facilitating relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. In demonstration of their concern, several Caribbean Governments have already begun to respond by providing various forms of assistance.

I wish also to place on record CARICOM's sincere appreciation to those Governments and institutions within the United Nations system that have readily responded to the plight of the victims of this disaster. We look forward to the continued support of the international community for the efforts of the affected countries to help themselves towards recovery.

Finally, it must be said that the disaster of hurricane Georges has once again underlined the extreme vulnerability of small developing States and the need for special consideration of their conditions. The fragility of their ecosystems and economies makes them particularly

susceptible to the forces of nature and of the global economy. We therefore call on the international community to renew its solidarity and its support for the long-term sustainability of these States as we prepare for the review in 1999 of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Mr. Tchoulkov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation attaches great importance to questions of the strengthening of United Nations coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

We express our solidarity with and support for the Governments and the peoples that have been affected by hurricane Georges. The Russian delegation would like to state its decision to join the sponsors of the draft resolution entitled "Emergency assistance to Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis" (A/53/L.2/Rev.1).

I would like to draw the Secretariat's attention to the fact that in the Russian translation of the draft resolution, operative paragraph 4 does not include all the names of the countries on whose behalf it is to be adopted. We would like to ask the Secretariat to correct that mistake.

I would like to take this opportunity to declare the solidarity of the Russian Federation with the resolution adopted last week entitled "Assistance to Bangladesh the wake of the devastating floods". For technical reasons, our delegation was unable to become a sponsor of that resolution at the time of its adoption. We wish to say today that we support that resolution and we ask that this be reflected in the record of this meeting.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1, entitled "Emergency assistance to Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/1 B).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): On behalf of all the countries affected by this most unusual hurricane — Georges — I wish to express my thanks and gratitude for the overwhelming support that the resolution has received.

This hurricane was not in intensity as severe as Gilbert, Hugo or Louis in recent years, but it followed a path from off of Cape Verde and never diverged from the course the computers predicted it would take. Normally, when there is a hurricane, a list is made of the islands or countries that might be hit. But this hurricane hit all of the countries they said it would. Not only that, but Georges went through all the different language areas. It hit the Dutch-speaking territories of Sint Eustatius and Saba; it hit the Spanish-speaking countries of Cuba and the Dominican Republic; it hit the French- and Creole-speaking country of Haiti; and it hit the English-speaking countries of Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

In one country, as much as 80 per cent of the housing stock was destroyed. In every country numerous people were left homeless. And it seems to me that the Assembly needs to be thinking in terms of the future in preparing a special fund for small island developing countries, because our vulnerabilities are numerous. For 45 years the country of Antigua and Barbuda did not witness a hurricane; in the past three years it has had three hurricanes.

Beyond that, there are other vicissitudes in the territories of the Caribbean. These include volcanoes — an active one in Montserrat, one rising off of Grenada, others in Saint Vincent, Guadeloupe and other areas of the Caribbean. We are thus in a precarious position and location, and that is why we have to constantly reiterate our vulnerabilities.

Once again I not only express my thanks but also plead that special consideration be given to the development of a fund which we can activate quickly when these emergencies arise.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.